

CAREY AUDIENCES WITH THE POPE

December 5, 1996 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, head of the Church of England, visited Pope John Paul II on December 2-5 in Rome. The visit was intended to further ecumenical relations between Anglicanism and the Roman Catholic Church.

During his audience with Carey, the pope said, "Through these visits, and especially through the prayer which accompanies them, we have been reminded again and again that, even in our sad separation, Anglicans and Catholics have not ceased to be brothers and sisters in the one Lord. The task before us is to strengthen that bond, until we reach the full unity that is Christ's will for us" (Vatican Information Service, December 4, 1996).

For his part, Carey congratulated the pope on the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination, and added: "We give thanks to God for your ministry."

Upon his arrival in Rome, Carey stated: "Here, so soon after my arrival in Rome, it suffices only to reaffirm the absolute commitment both of myself personally and also of the Anglican Communion to the full, visible unity of God's Church, a commitment which lies at the heart of our identity as a Church."

During his stay in Rome, Carey prayed before the alleged tomb of "St. Peter" and visited the Vatican Secret Archives.

This is Carey's second visit to the pope. His first was in June 1992. Leaders of the Church of England have been making pilgrimages to the Vatican for almost four decades. The first visit was made by Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher in December 1960 to meet John XXIII, the pope who organized the Vatican II Council. In March 1966 Archbishop Michael Ramsey met with Pope Paul VI. Ramsey paid tribute to the pope for his deep commitment to unity, and he said that already Christians may rejoice in their "common baptism." Ramsey's journey to Rome that year marked the initiation of formal dialogue between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church toward eventual unity. In 1977 Archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggan met with Pope Paul VI. They exchanged a "kiss of peace" and issued a joint appeal for Christian unity. In October 1989 Archbishop Robert Runcie met with Pope John Paul II in Rome. During his visit, Runcie called for all Christians to accept the pope as a common leader "presiding in love." Two weeks before his visit to Rome, Runcie told the Catholic magazine "Il Regno" that personally, he would accept some kind of papal authority "linked to a renewed ecumenical and universal primacy." Runcie attended a papal mass during his visit.

Pope John Paul II reciprocated and made a historic visit to England in 1982. He was received by George Carey's predecessor, Robert Runcie. Speaking in Westminster Cathedral, the pope

said, "Today, for the first time in history, a Bishop of Rome sets foot on British soil." Time magazine (June 7, 1982) stated that Robert Runcie had told them in an exclusive interview that he saw the usefulness of the papacy as "a focus for unity and affection" that was "given to Rome from the days of the early church." He believes Rome "can give a great deal to us in terms of doctrinal coherence."

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).